

Adapted from the work of:  
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## Most Effective vs. Least Effective Classrooms

### In “Most Effective” Classrooms. . .

- Many more skills were covered during an hour of instruction- “teachers never teaching just one thing at a time- always making connections, extending”
- Word level instruction meant teaching multiple strategies- “examples- context, using pictures along with phonics, etc.”
- There is more explicit teaching of comprehension strategies
- Students were more likely to be taught to self-regulate- “taught specific strategies”
- Steps in writing process were taught and emphasized more consistently- “high expectations- connected”
- More extensive scaffolding during writing- “read story-talk-write on a related topic-time to talk about writing”
- There were more printed prompts for the writing process
- There was higher teacher demand for writing conventions
- Tasks were designed so students spent more time doing academically rich processing and relatively little time on non-academic processing
- Students wrote more books which became part of the class library

### In “Least Effective” Classrooms. . .

- An **exclusive** emphasis on phonics and skills instruction (the “how” without the “why”)
- An **exclusive** emphasis on the reasons for reading (the “why” without the “how”)
- Dominated by teacher talk, teacher reading, teacher writing- “students need opportunities to talk, read, write; active student engagement”
- Students spending most of their time completing worksheets
- Made up of tasks that are too easy or too difficult for individual students
- So focused on materials that students don’t learn to monitor their own reading and writing processes
- Conducted in a negative or punitive atmosphere
- Isolated from the rest of classroom learning- “need to see the purpose for reading and writing”

### Developing Comprehension Abilities Through Instruction

Michael Pressley

- Teach decoding skills (teach comprehension skills from kindergarten on as well)
- Encourage the development of sight words
- Use context: teach students to use semantic context cues
- Teach vocabulary meanings (words that they need to know to understand text, that they are likely to need help with, ones that they are likely to encounter frequently)
- Encourage extensive reading (making predictions, making connections)
- Encourage students to ask themselves why the ideas presented in a text make sense (we connect new information with what we know already)
- Teach self-regulated use of comprehension strategies

Instruction in strategies needs to occur before, during and after reading; before reading strategies are critical - they set students up to be more active, involved readers.